BATMAN.
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT®
NO 9 JUL 90
150 CAN 185
Gothic
GRANT MORRISON • KLAUS JANSON
PART FOUR OF FIVE

Gothic
a romance

By Grant Morrison and Klaus Janson

IN FIVE VOLUMES

'All perils, specially malignant, are recurrent.
A murderer who is such by passion and by
wilful craving for bloodshed as
a mode of unnatural luxury
cannot relapse into inertia.'

ON MURDER CONSIDERED
AS ONE OF THE FINE ARTS

volume four

The Hangman's Tale

Colored by Steve Buccellato
Lettered by John Costanza

Andrew Helfer, Editor
Kevin Dooley, Ass't. Editor

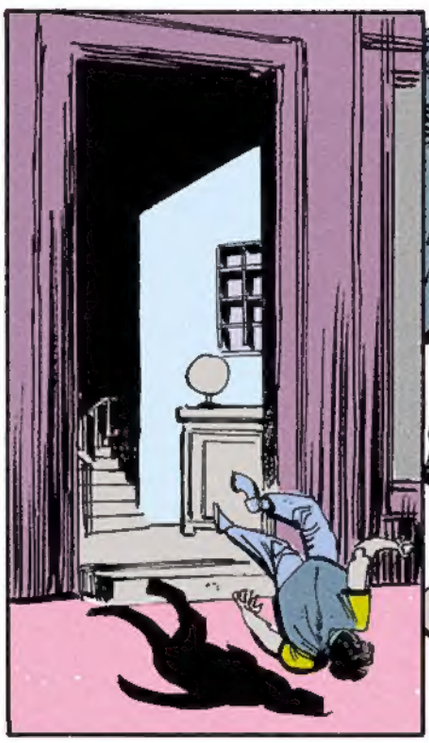
HOTEL
HOOPER!
HOOPER, THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING!
COME OUT OF THERE, HOOPER!
YOU LISTENING TO ME?
WE GOT THE PLACE SURROUNDED!
YOU HEAR ME, HOOPER? YOU CAN WALK OUT OF THERE OR WE CAN CARRY YOU OUT IN A BAG!
WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!
SHUT UP OR I BLOW THE KID TO...
HOOPER.

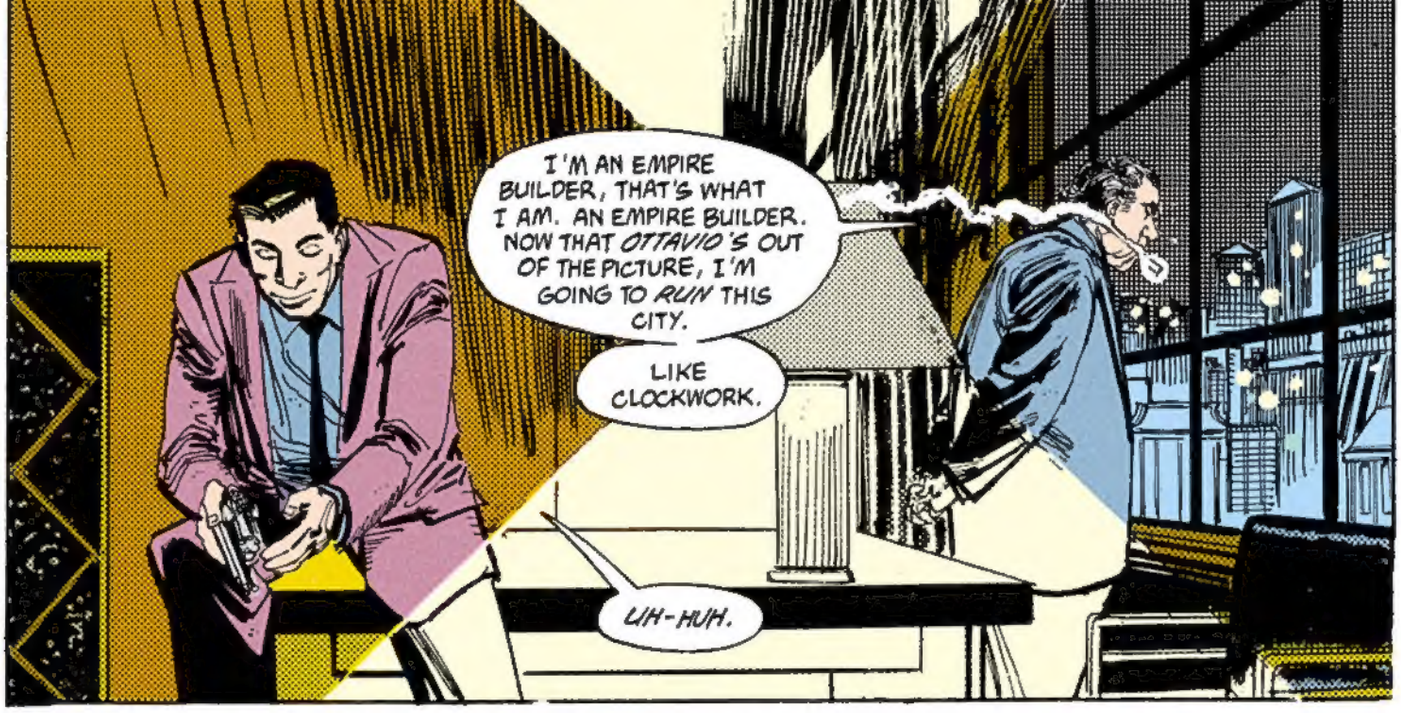
CHILDREN ARE *NOT* TO BE THREATENED.

NOOOOO

HOTEL



I GUESS THE *BAT-MAN'S* BACK IN TOWN.


I'M AN EMPIRE BUILDER, THAT'S WHAT I AM. AN EMPIRE BUILDER. NOW THAT *OTTAVIO'S* OUT OF THE PICTURE, I'M GOING TO *RUN* THIS CITY.
LIKE CLOCKWORK.
UH-HUH.

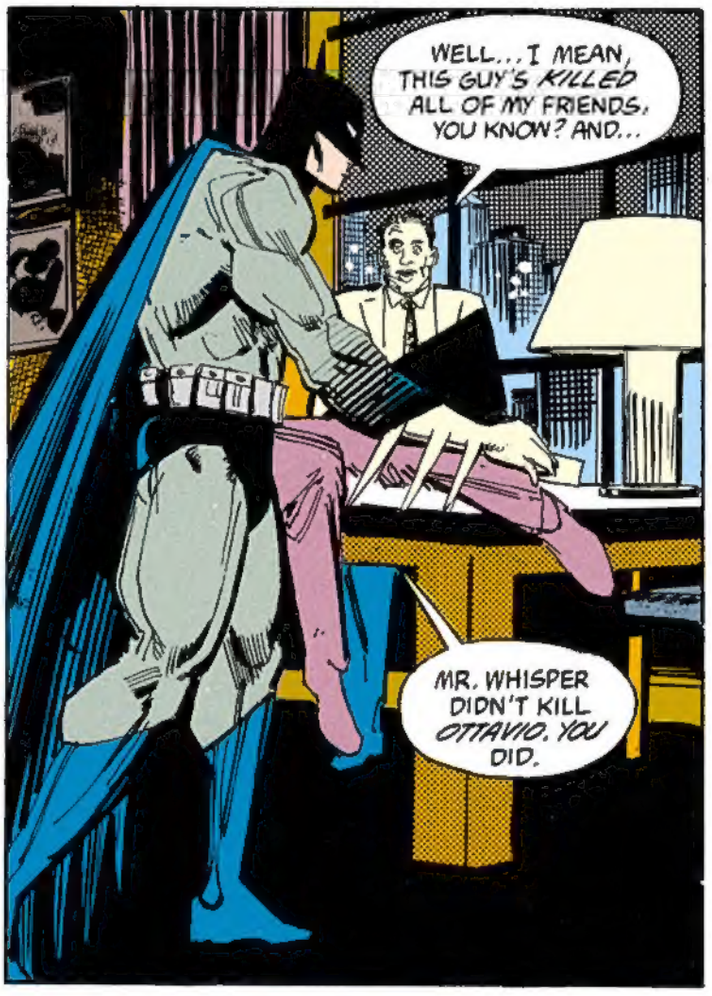
I TELL YOU, EVERYTHING WOULD BE JUST FINE IF I DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THIS *WHISPER* GUY.
NOT THAT I'M REALLY WORRIED... I MEAN, YOU AND THE *BOYS'LL* KEEP ME SAFE, WON'T YOU, *MURRAY?*

WON'T YOU?
MURRAY?

AH!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, *MORGENSTERN?*

YOU SEEM A LITTLE JUMPY.


WELL... I MEAN, THIS GUY'S KILLED ALL OF MY FRIENDS, YOU KNOW? AND...
MR. WHISPER DIDN'T KILL OTTAVIO. YOU DID.

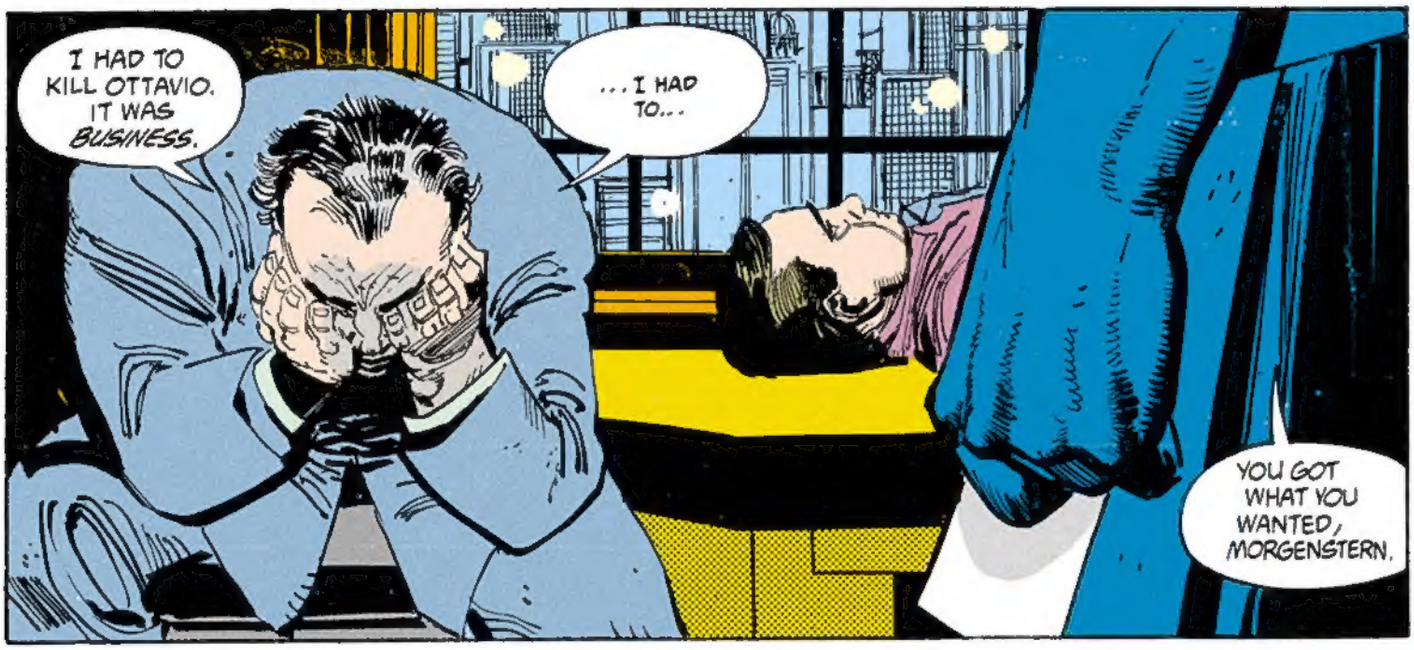
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I...
WHISPER SENT OTTAVIO A QUOTATION FROM "TWELFTH NIGHT"--"IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE...". I CHECKED THE PIANO IN OTTAVIO'S APARTMENT. IT WAS BOOBY-TRAPPED WITH SEMTEX
MUSIC, YOU SEE? AND YET OTTAVIO DIED AFTER DRINKING POISONED WINE. WINE YOU SENT HIM.

DON'T WASTE MY TIME WITH LIES, MORGENSTERN. I NEED INFORMATION.
TELL ME ABOUT MR. WHISPER.
TELL WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU KILLED HIM THE FIRST TIME.

YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE HERE... MAKING ACCUSATIONS ...I... DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING TO YOU...
...I...

IT WAS TWENTY YEARS AGO.
I'M TALKING TWENTY YEARS AGO NOW, OKAY?
"THERE WAS ME, OTTAVIO, LEO GRAZIANO AND THE KANE BOYS -- ALL OF US YOUNG GUNS ON THE WAY UP.
"THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS THAT SOME MANIAC HAD KILLED SEVEN KIDS. THE COPS WERE GOING CRAZY AND THE HEAT ON THE STREETS WAS MAKING IT HARD FOR US TO OPERATE.
DAILY GOTHAM
7th VICTIM FOUND
STRING KILLER STRIKES AGAIN?
"SO WE FIGURED WE'D FIND THE GUY OURSELVES, USING OUR OWN METHODS.
"FOR ABOUT A MONTH WE LEANED ON ALL THE RIGHT PEOPLE; THE BUMS AND THE WINOS AND THE PERVERTS. IT WAS LIKE WADING IN SEWAGE. A WHOLE MONTH...
"AND EVENTUALLY WE GOT A TIP-OFF THAT LED US TO SOME FILTHY CONDEMNED TENEMENT ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE.
"I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER FORGET THAT PLACE. IT STANK OF TOMCATS AND MOLD AND EVEN THE LIGHT WAS BAD, LIKE SOUR MILK.
"THAT'S WHERE WE FOUND HIM. MR. WHISPER.
"THE ROOM WAS HOT, STIFLING, AND WHISPER WAS BENDING OVER A KIND OF BUNDLE ON THE BED. HE HAD A KNIFE.

"THE BUNDLE WAS .. MEWLING... I...
"ME AND OTTAVIO FIRED FIRST.
"WE THOUGHT WE'D BLOWN THE BASTARD AWAY...
"BUT HE WAS STILL ALIVE.
"STILL ALIVE!
"THAT'S WHEN JACK KANE WENT AT HIM WITH THE AXE.
"HE COULDN'T KILL HIM. HE TRIED, BUT HE COULDN'T KILL THE GUY. IT WAS LIKE A BAD DREAM, LIKE A BUTCHER'S SHOP.
"IT WAS LIKE HIS BODY JUST KEPT FIXING ITSELF AND ALL THE TIME WHISPER KEPT SCREAMING THAT HE'D GET US, HE'D MAKE US PAY...
"IN THE END, WE TIED AN ANCHOR AROUND HIS NECK AND DUMPED HIM IN THE RIVER. BAD DREAM OVER.
"WE ALL WOKE UP."
HEH.
WE ALL WOKE UP, WE ALL GOT OLD, AND ALL THE TIME, HE WAS WAITING.


I HAD TO KILL OTTAVIO. IT WAS *BUSINESS.*
...I HAD TO...
YOU GOT WHAT YOU WANTED, MORGENSTERN.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE KING OF THE DUNGHEAP?

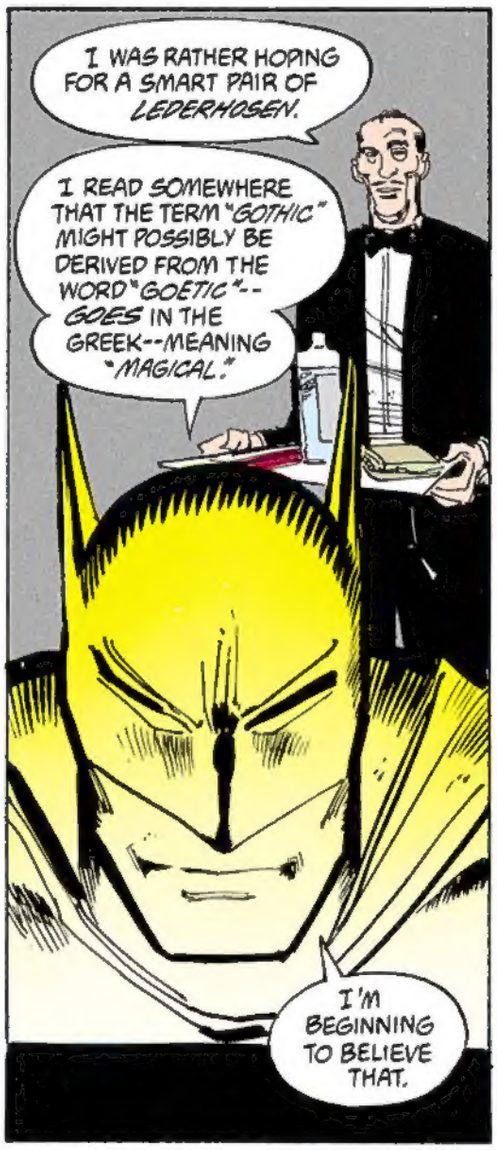
BATMAN, LISTEN... I'VE GOT A *MEETING* GOING DOWN TONIGHT, AT THE OLD CHEMICAL WORKS ON THE WATERFRONT.
IF YOU REALLY *REALLY* WANT TO *CATCH* THIS GUY, MAYBE WE CAN TALK SOMETHING OVER BETWEEN US.

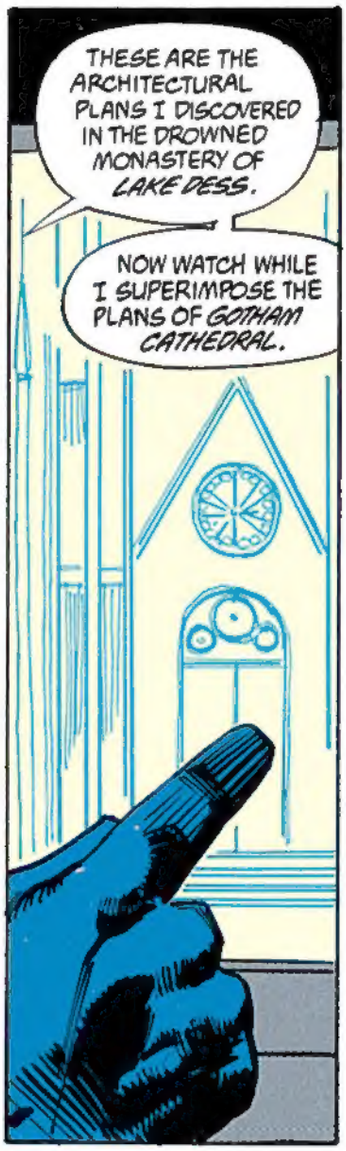
"HAS HE NOT A ROGUE'S FACE?..."
WHAT DOES IT *MEAN?* WHAT'S HE TRYING TO *DO* TO ME, BATMAN?

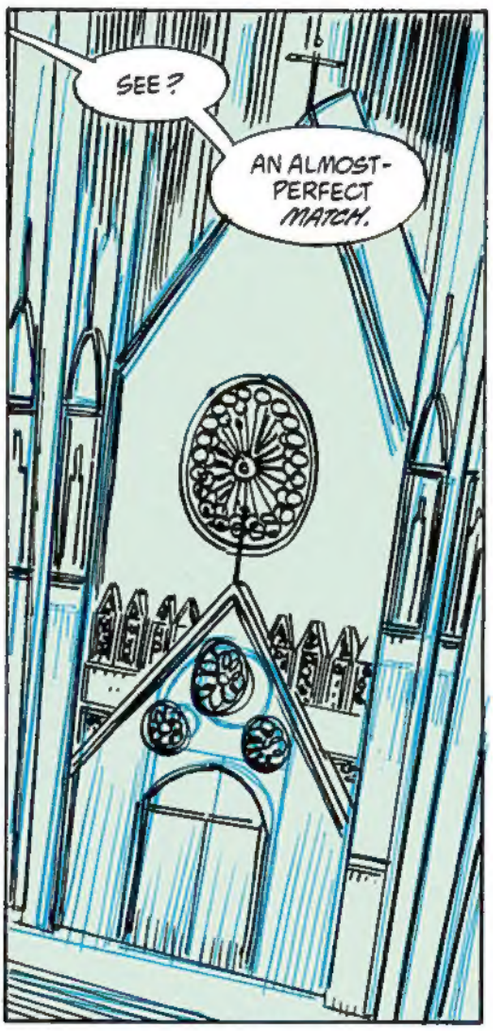
...BATMAN...?

...BATMAN...?

...AND HOW WAS AUSTRIA, MASTER BRUCE?
I NOTICED YOU FAILED TO BRING ME BACK A PRESENT.
I WISH I KNEW A LITTLE MORE ABOUT SACRED GEOMETRY. MY READING ON THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN WOEFULLY INADEQUATE.
REMIND ME TO ORDER SOME BOOKS, ALFRED.

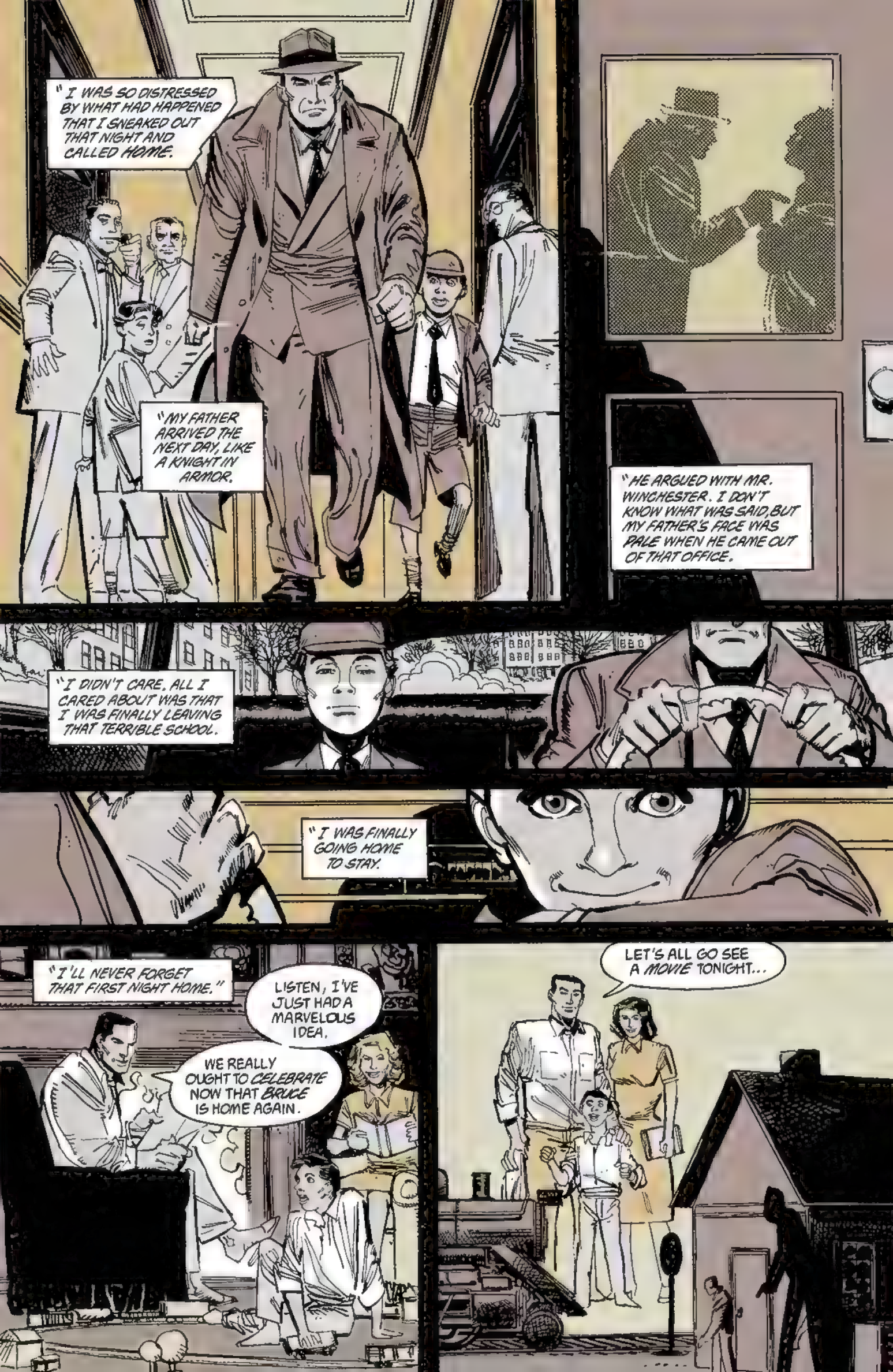

I WAS RATHER HOPING FOR A SMART PAIR OF LEDERHOSEN.
I READ SOMEWHERE THAT THE TERM "GOTHIC" MIGHT POSSIBLY BE DERIVED FROM THE WORD "GOETIC"--GOES IN THE GREEK--MEANING "MAGICAL."
I'M BEGINNING TO BELIEVE THAT.

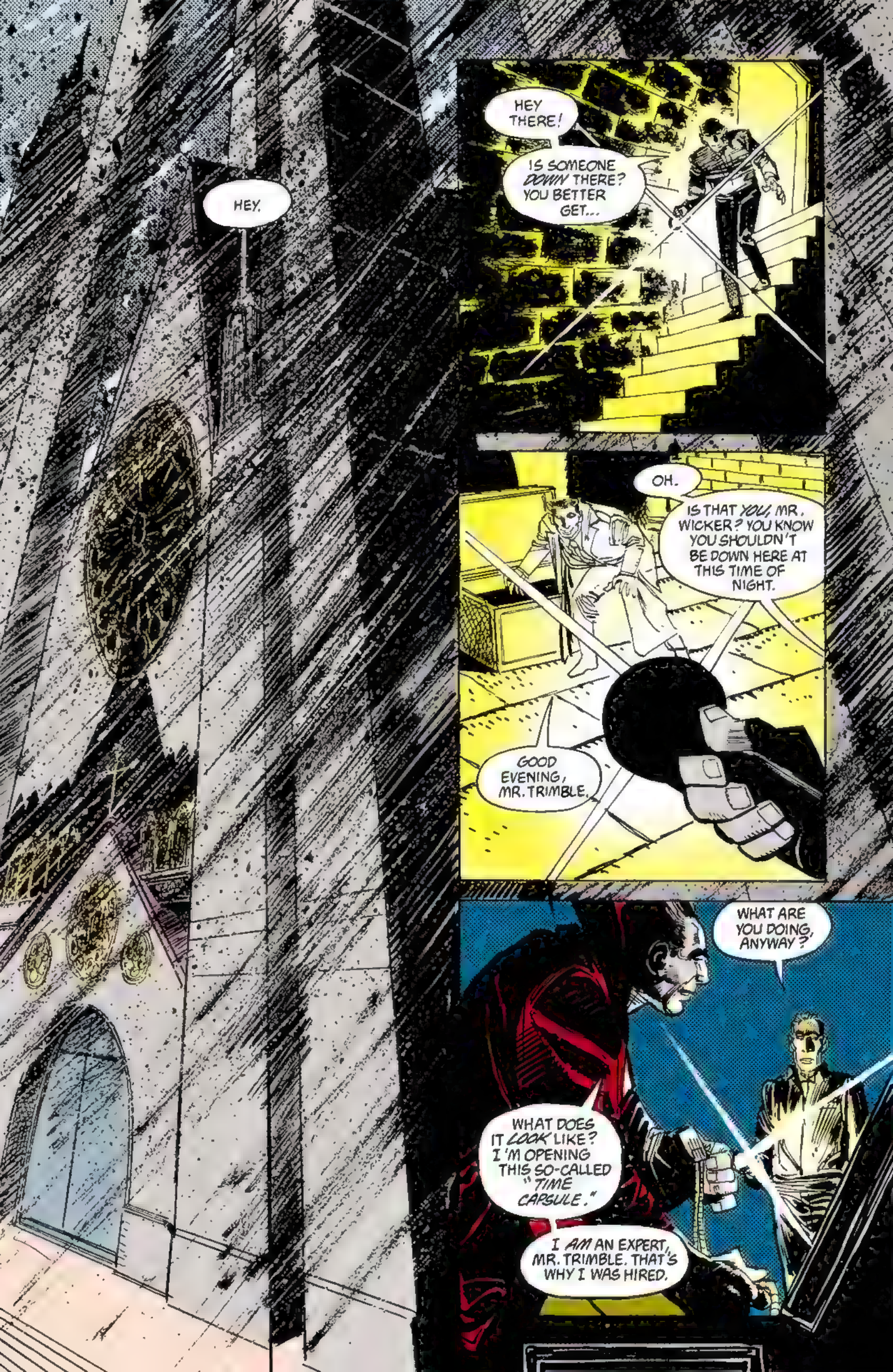

THESE ARE THE ARCHITECTURAL PLANS I DISCOVERED IN THE DROWNED MONASTERY OF LAKE DESS.
NOW WATCH WHILE I SUPERIMPOSE THE PLANS OF GOTHAM CATHEDRAL.


SEE?
AN ALMOST-PERFECT MATCH.

A MAN WITH NO SHADOW WHO'S LIVED FOR OVER THREE HUNDRED YEARS. DREAMS. GHOSTS. MURDERED CHILDREN AND OCCULT ARCHITECTURE.
HOW DOES IT ALL CONNECT?
ONE SHUDDERS TO THINK.

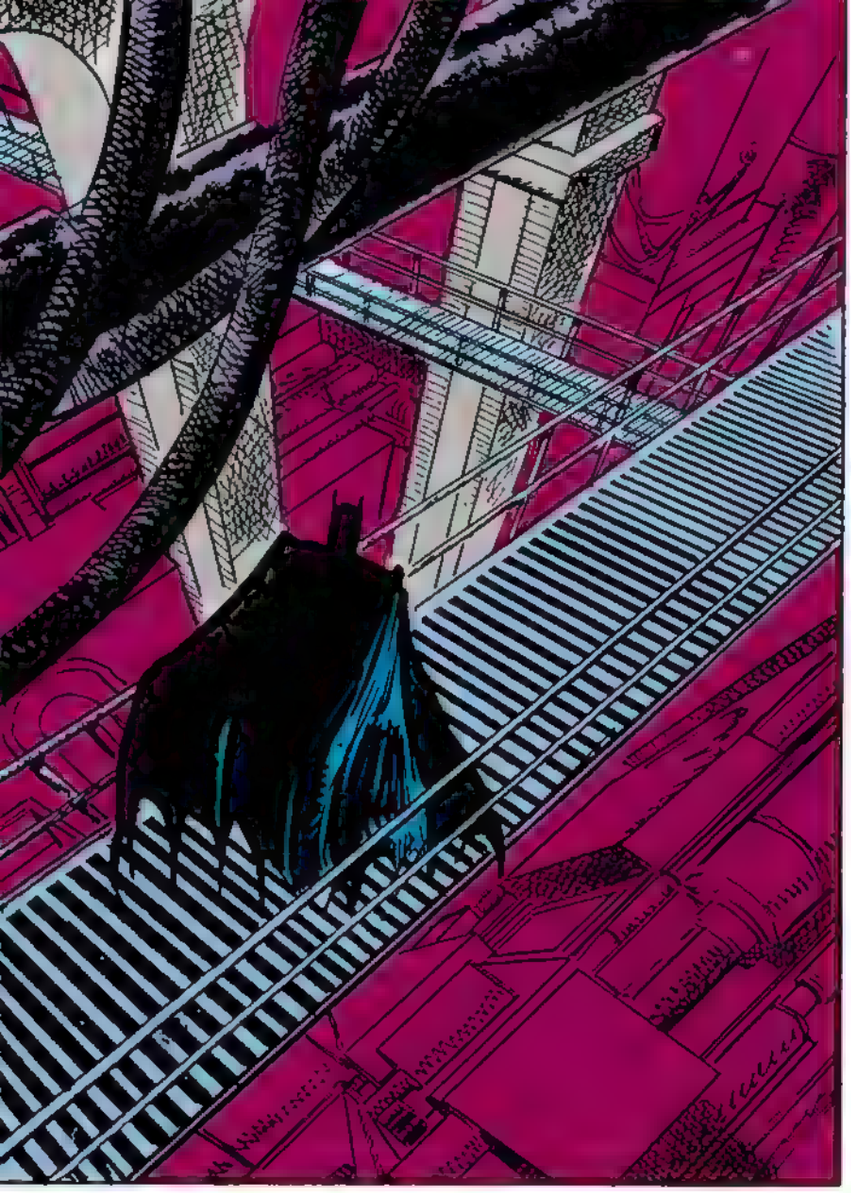
APPARENTLY GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE WAS BASED ON A KIND OF ARCH, CALLED THE OGIVE. THE IDEA WAS THAT ALL THE STRESSES AND FORCES OF THE BUILDING WERE DIRECTED UPWARDS.
THE CATHEDRAL BECAME A TRANS-MITTER, AIMED TOWARDS GOD.
CATHEDRALS WERE ALSO DESIGNED TO HAVE CERTAIN ACOUSTIC PROPERTIES, LIKE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ON A GRAND SCALE.
THE WHOLE EFFECT WAS TO PRODUCE A VAST CRUCIBLE, IN WHICH A KIND OF SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY COULD TAKE PLACE.
DOES ANY OF THIS HELP TO EXPLAIN YOUR DREAMS, MASTER BRUCE?
IF ARCHITECTURE COULD BE USED TO FOCUS AND DIRECT SPIRITUAL POWER, THEN... THEN...
COULD IT ALSO BE USED FOR EVIL? AND IF SO, WHAT KIND OF EVIL ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN GOTHAM CATHEDRAL ON MAY DAY?
MY FATHER KNEW SOMETHING. THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN DREAMING ABOUT HIM.
I TOLD YOU WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY I WAS BEATEN BY MR. WINCHESTER...
I COULDN'T STAY IN THAT SCHOOL ANY LONGER. I COULDN'T.

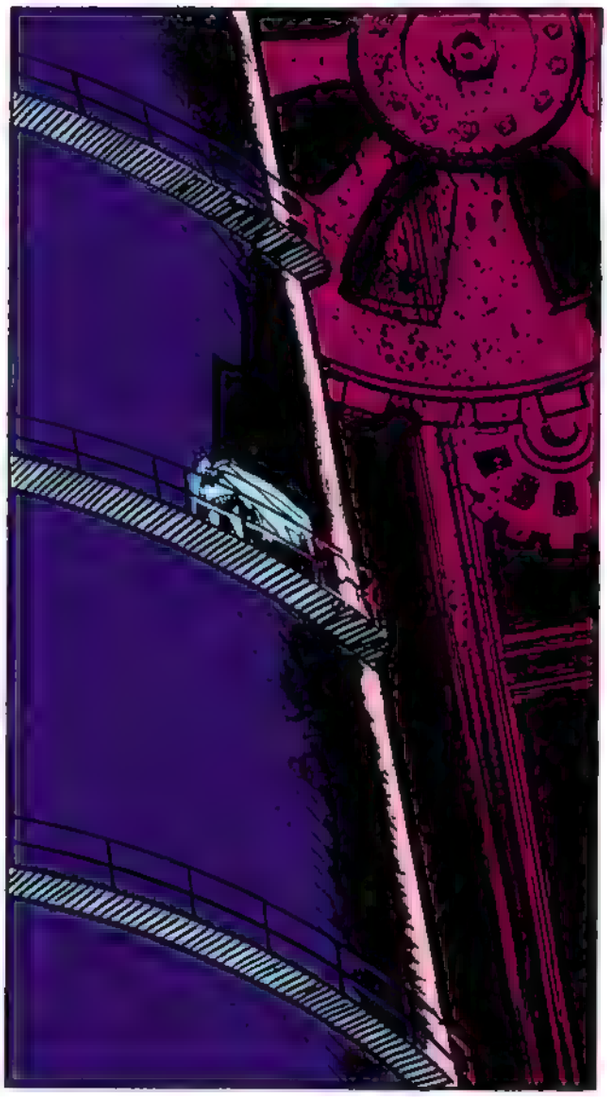

"I WAS SO DISTRESSED BY WHAT HAD HAPPENED THAT I SNEAKED OUT THAT NIGHT AND CALLED HOME.
"MY FATHER ARRIVED THE NEXT DAY, LIKE A KNIGHT IN ARMOR.
"HE ARGUED WITH MR. WINCHESTER. I DON'T KNOW WHAT WAS SAID, BUT MY FATHER'S FACE WAS PALE WHEN HE CAME OUT OF THAT OFFICE.
"I DIDN'T CARE. ALL I CARED ABOUT WAS THAT I WAS FINALLY LEAVING THAT TERRIBLE SCHOOL.
"I WAS FINALLY GOING HOME TO STAY.
"I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT FIRST NIGHT HOME."
LISTEN, I'VE JUST HAD A MARVELOUS IDEA.
WE REALLY OUGHT TO CELEBRATE NOW THAT BRUCE IS HOME AGAIN.
LET'S ALL GO SEE A MOVIE TONIGHT...


HEY.
HEY THERE!
IS SOMEONE DOWN THERE? YOU BETTER GET...
OH.
IS THAT YOU, MR. WICKER? YOU KNOW YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOWN HERE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT.
GOOD EVENING, MR. TRIMBLE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, ANYWAY?
WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? I'M OPENING THIS SO-CALLED "TIME CAPSULE."
I AM AN EXPERT, MR. TRIMBLE. THAT'S WHY I WAS HIRED.

SEE?
I'VE FOUND THIS FASCINATING PIECE OF CORD.
I DON'T THINK YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO THAT. THE MAYOR HAS TO OPEN THAT BOX IN TWO DAYS...
THE MAYOR WILL BE DEAD IN TWO DAYS, LIKE EVERY-ONE ELSE. HE WON'T MIND.
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE IN THE CASKET ANYWAY. JUST THIS.
WOULD YOU LIKE A CLOSER LOOK?
UHH
KRUCH-URRRRR
THERE! CLOSE ENOUGH? CLOSE ENOUGH, MR. TRIMBLE?
OH DEAR.

NEOCHEMICAL





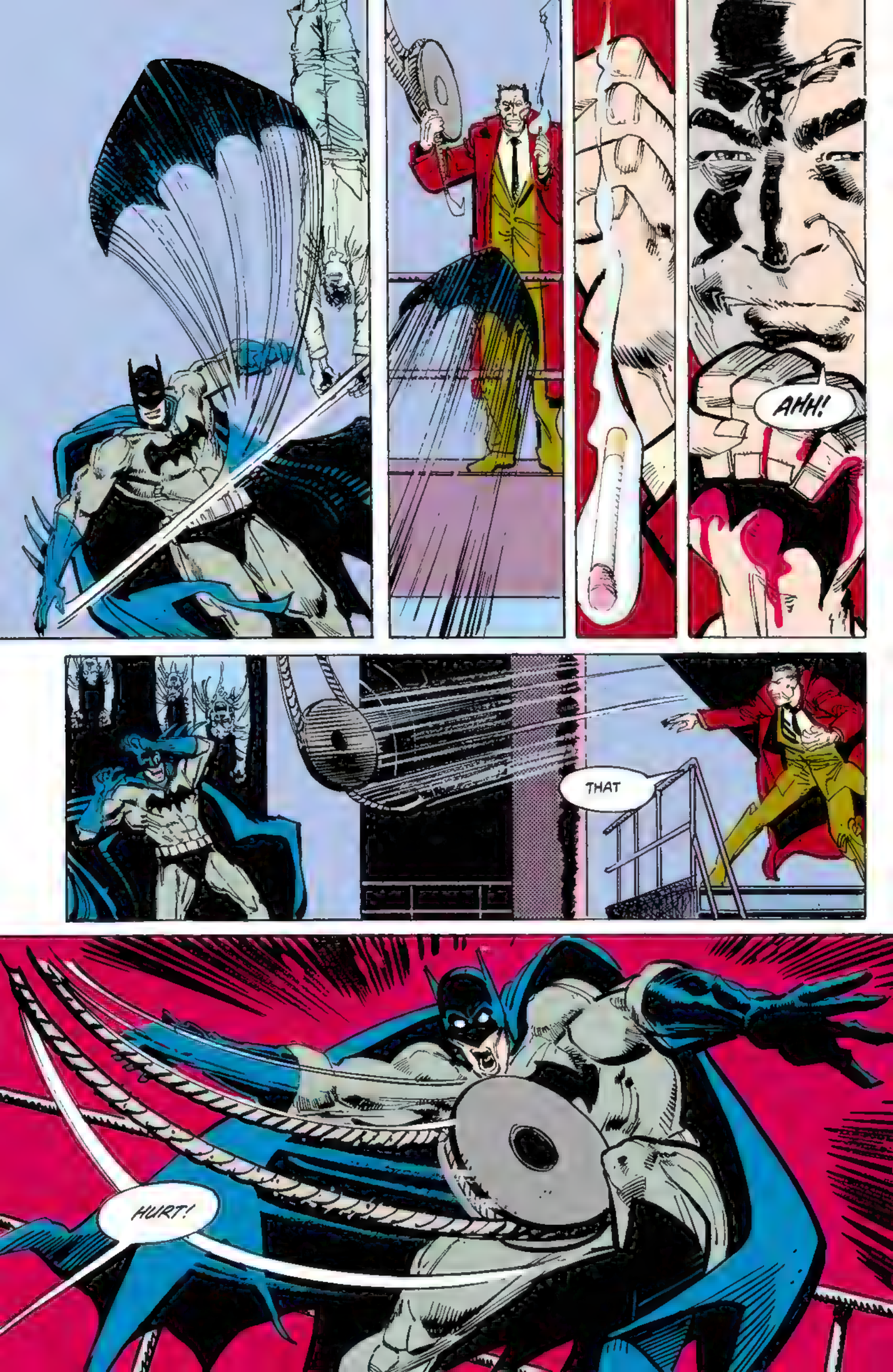
MORGENSTERN?
MORGENSTERN, I'M HERE.

MORGENSTERN?
IT'S BATMAN. ARE YOU...

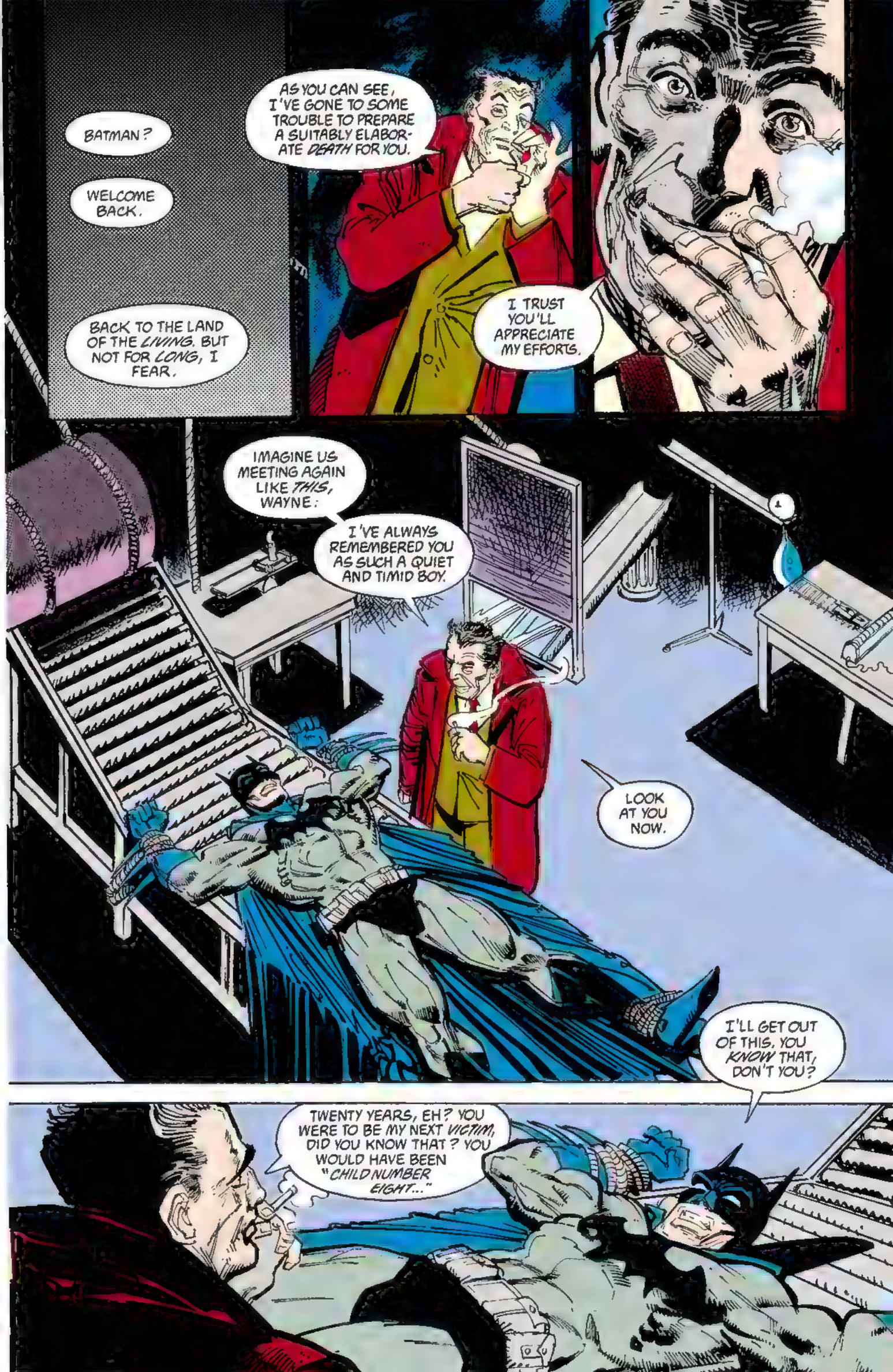
OH.
MY GOD.

MORGENSTERN.
IT'S TRUE BATMAN.

IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT SMALL MEN.

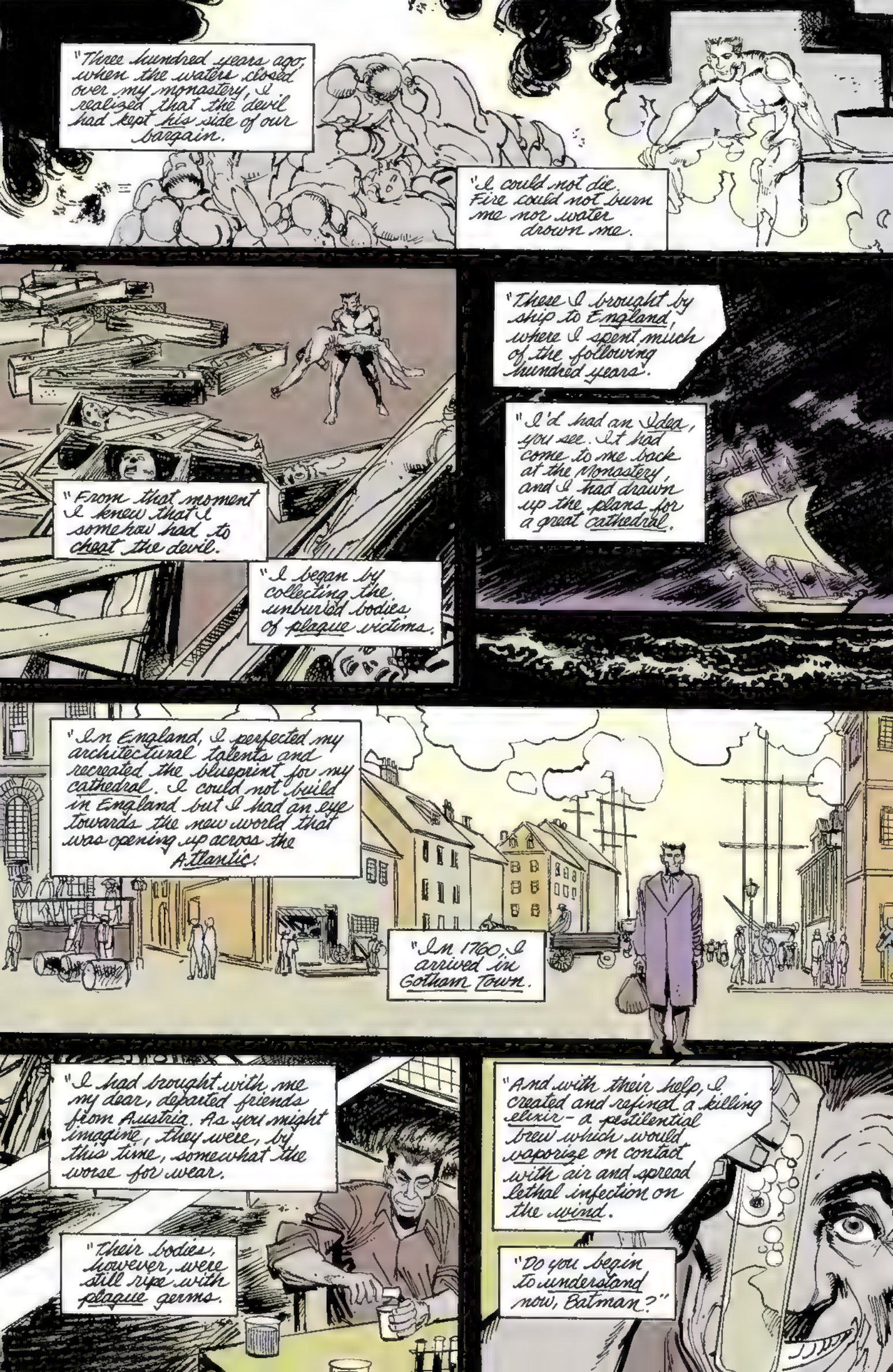

AHH!
THAT
HURT!

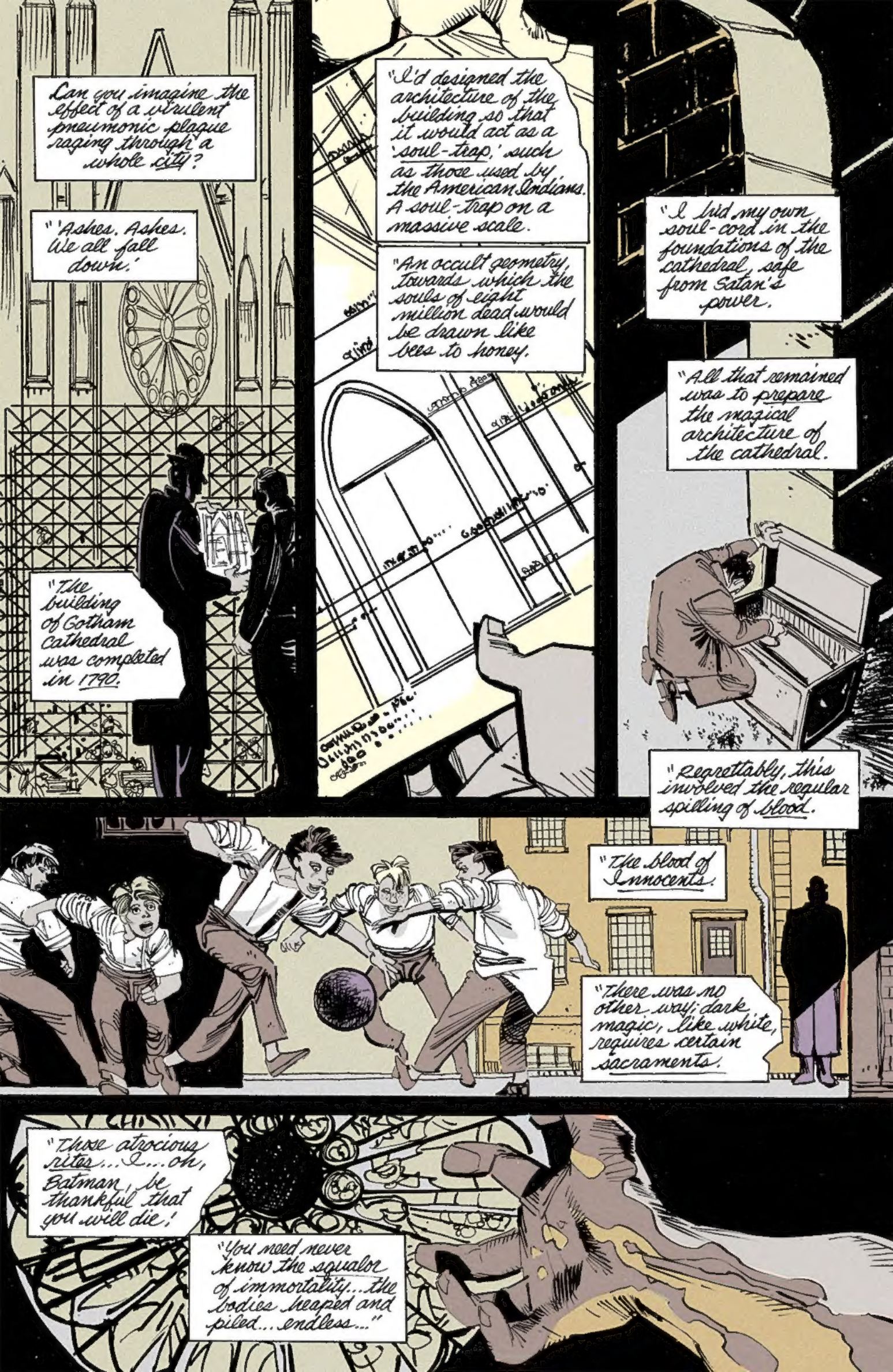
UFF!

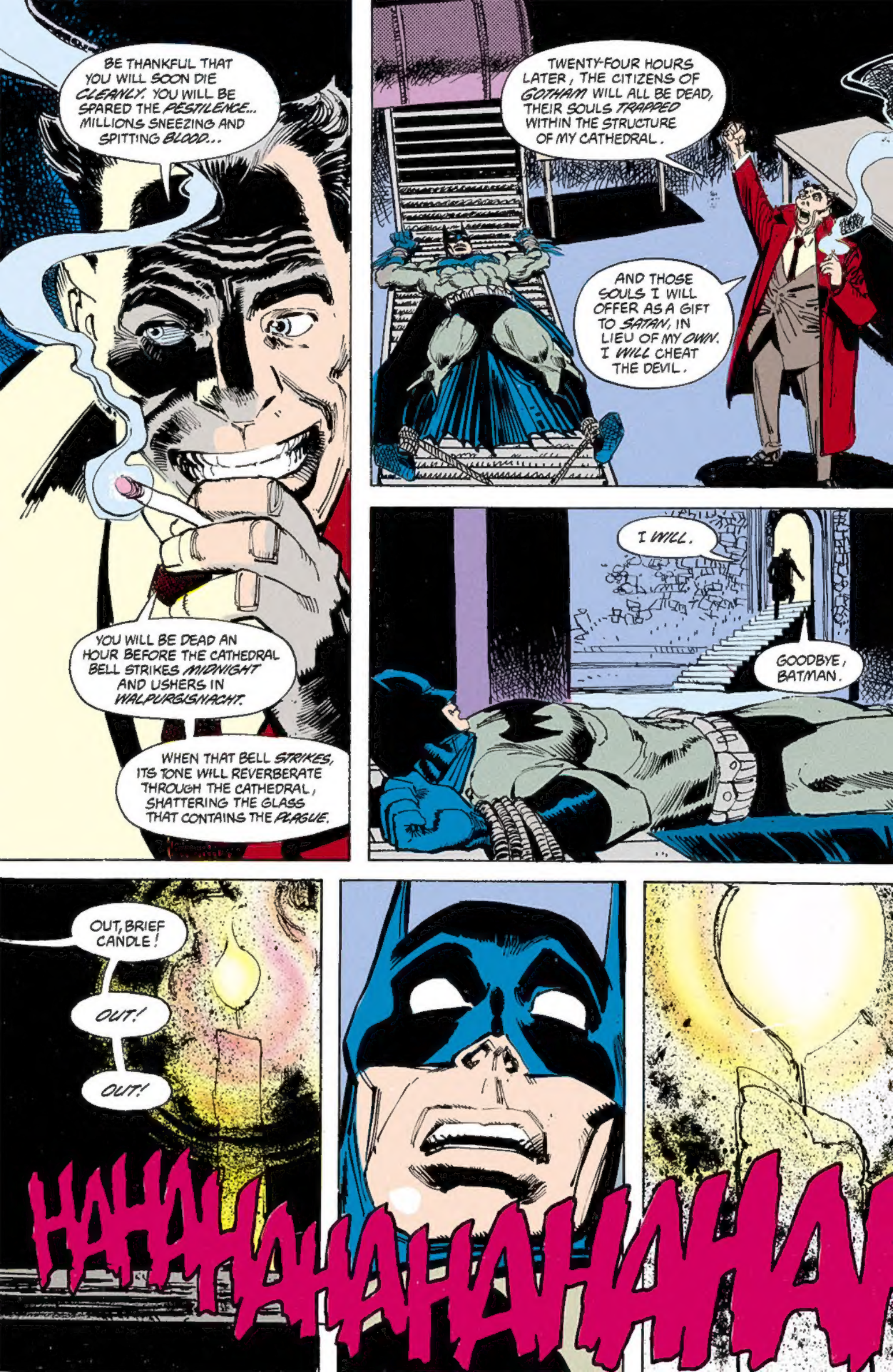

BATMAN?
WELCOME BACK.
BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING. BUT NOT FOR LONG, I FEAR.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE GONE TO SOME TROUBLE TO PREPARE A SUITABLY ELABORATE DEATH FOR YOU.
I TRUST YOU'LL APPRECIATE MY EFFORTS.
IMAGINE US MEETING AGAIN LIKE THIS, WAYNE:
I'VE ALWAYS REMEMBERED YOU AS SUCH A QUIET AND TIMID BOY.
LOOK AT YOU NOW.
I'LL GET OUT OF THIS. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
TWENTY YEARS, EH? YOU WERE TO BE MY NEXT VICTIM. DID YOU KNOW THAT? YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN "CHILD NUMBER EIGHT..."

LUCKY YOU.
YOU SHOULD HAVE KILLED ME THEN.
I'LL MAKE YOU REGRET THAT YOU DIDN'T.
YOUR FATHER SUSPECTED. HE KNEW THAT I'D KILLED THOSE CHILDREN. HE SAW THROUGH ME AS THOUGH I WERE MADE OF GLASS.
HE WOULD HAVE EXPOSED ME IF BLIND FATE HADN'T INTERVENED.
I REMEMBER THE HEADLINES. THAT'S WHAT CHANGED YOU, WASN'T IT?
THAT'S WHEN YOU WERE PLUNGED INTO THE DARKNESS. YOU'RE STILL LITTLE MORE THAN A BRUTALIZED CHILD FOR WHOM THE WORLD IS ALL SHADOWS AND FEAR.
I PITY YOU.
I SUPPOSE IT'S A KIND OF HELL.
BUT DON'T WORRY: I WILL DELIVER YOU.
WHEN THIS CANDLE BURNS DOWN, IT WILL SET IN MOTION A CHAIN REACTION.
I WON'T GO INTO DETAILS, BUT IT ALL ENDS WITH THAT VERY LARGE OIL DRUM CRUSHING YOUR FRAGILE SKULL.
IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL, YOU UNDERSTAND. I DO THIS SIMPLY BECAUSE I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO PREVENT WHAT MUST OCCUR.

THE HELL YOU ARE IN IS AS NOTHING TO THE ONE THAT AWAITS ME.
UPON THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT, TWENTY-SIX HOURS FROM NOW, MY SOUL IS FORFEIT.
WITH BLOOD I SIGNED AWAY MY IMMORTAL SOUL. THE DEVIL CAME TO ME, CLOTHED AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT, AND OFFERED ME THESE THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF LIFE.
SOON HE WILL RETURN AND BEAR ME AWAY TO EVERLASTING TORMENT. OH GOD, I HAVE WISHED THAT I COULD MELT, BECOME RAIN THAT FALLS AND THEN EVAPORATES!
BUT WISHES LEAD US ONLY INTO HARM. I CANNOT TRUST TO WISHES. I HAVE DEVISED MY OWN ESCAPE ROUTE.
THIS HERE IS MY SOUL.
I MEASURED MY SHADOW WITH THIS MAGIC CORD AND BY THAT ACT TRAPPED MY SOUL WITHIN THE TWINE. IT'S AN OLD TRICK.
I DIDN'T EXPECT MY HIDING PLACE TO BE UNCOVERED.
FORTUNATELY, I HAD RETURNED TO GOTHAM ON OTHER BUSINESS.
THE MURDER OF THOSE FOOLISH MEN WHO ONCE ATTEMPTED TO KILL ME WAS SIMPLY SOMETHING TO PASS THE TIME, OF COURSE.
YOU KNOW, I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M TELLING YOU THIS.
I LIKE YOU, WAYNE. I CAN'T HELP IT, BUT I DO.
THAT'S WHY I'M SPARING YOU THE WORST.

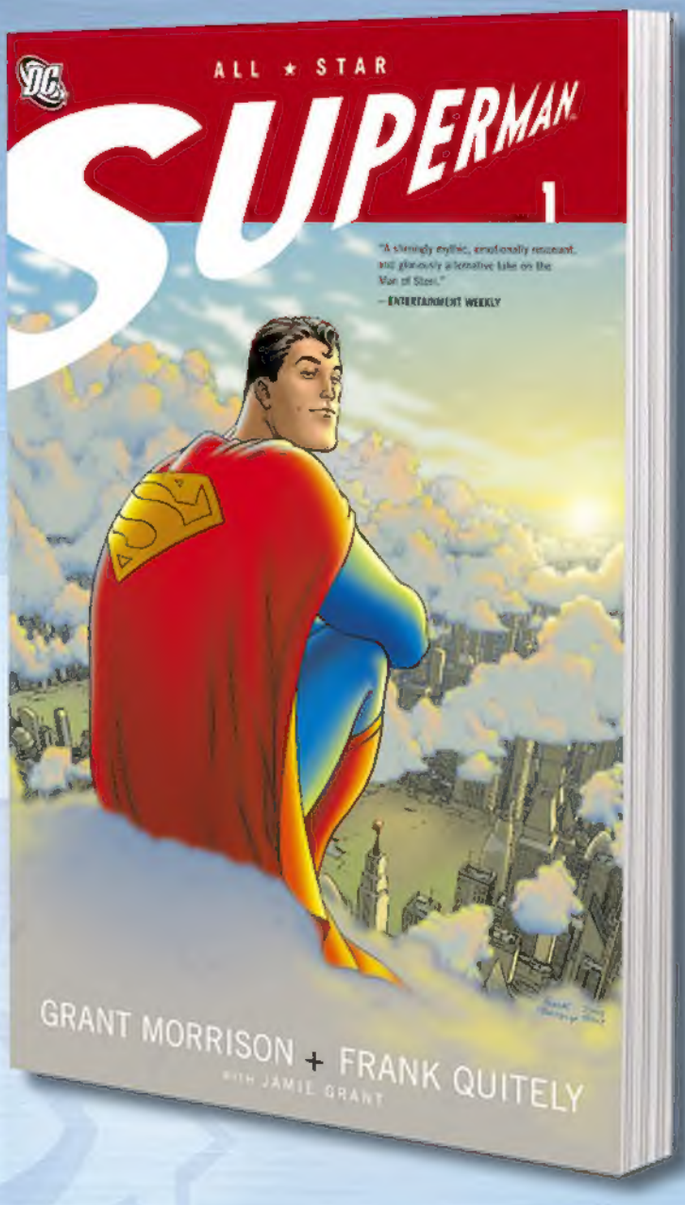

"Three hundred years ago, when the waters closed over my monastery, I realised that the devil had kept his side of our bargain.
"I could not die. Fire could not burn me nor water drown me.
"From that moment I knew that I somehow had to cheat the devil.
"I began by collecting the unburied bodies of plague victims.
"These I brought by ship to England, where I spent much of the following hundred years.
"I'd had an idea, you see. It had come to me back at the Monastery, and I had drawn up the plans for a great cathedral.
"In England, I perfected my architectural talents and recreated the blueprint for my cathedral. I could not build in England but I had an eye towards the new world that was opening up across the Atlantic.
"In 1760, I arrived in Gotham Town.
"I had brought with me my dear, departed friends from Austria. As you might imagine, they were, by this time, somewhat the worse for wear.
"Their bodies, however, were still ripe with plague germs.
"And with their help, I created and refined a killing elixir - a pestilential brew which would vaporize on contact with air and spread lethal infection on the wind.
"Do you begin to understand now, Batman?"


Can you imagine the effect of a virulent pneumonic plague raging through a whole city?
"'Ashes. Ashes. We all fall down.'
"The building of Gotham Cathedral was completed in 1790.
"I'd designed the architecture of the building so that it would act as a 'soul-trap,' such as those used by the American Indians. A soul-trap on a massive scale.
"An occult geometry, towards which the souls of eight million dead would be drawn like bees to honey.
"I hid my own soul-cord in the foundations of the cathedral, safe from Satan's power.
"All that remained was to prepare the magical architecture of the cathedral.
"Regrettably, this involved the regular spilling of blood.
"The blood of Innocents.
"There was no other way; dark magic, like white, requires certain sacraments.
"Those atrocious rites... I... oh, Batman, be thankful that you will die!
"You need never know the squalor of immortality... the bodies heaped and piled... endless..."


BE THANKFUL THAT YOU WILL SOON DIE CLEANLY. YOU WILL BE SPARED THE PESTILENCE... MILLIONS SNEEZING AND SPITTING BLOOD...
YOU WILL BE DEAD AN HOUR BEFORE THE CATHEDRAL BELL STRIKES MIDNIGHT AND USHERS IN WALPURGISNACHT.
WHEN THAT BELL STRIKES, ITS TONE WILL REVERBERATE THROUGH THE CATHEDRAL, SHATTERING THE GLASS THAT CONTAINS THE PLAGUE.
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, THE CITIZENS OF GOTHAM WILL ALL BE DEAD, THEIR SOULS TRAPPED WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF MY CATHEDRAL.
AND THOSE SOULS I WILL OFFER AS A GIFT TO SATAN, IN LIEU OF MY OWN. I WILL CHEAT THE DEVIL.
I WILL.
GOODBYE, BATMAN.
OUT, BRIEF CANDLE!
OUT!
OUT!
HAHAHAHAHA

"Maniacally brilliant."
– THE NEW YORK TIMES

GRANT MORRISON
with FRANK QUITELY



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with
KLAUS JANSON

BATMAN:
ARKHAM ASYLUM

with
DAVE McKEAN
Suggested for Mature Readers

SEVEN SOLDIERS
VOLS. 1-4

with
VARIOUS ARTISTS

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